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SUBJECT: QUANTIFYING VIOLENCE: TIJUANA'S DRUG VIOLENCE AS REFLECTED
IN THE STATISTICS

REF: A) TIJUANA 1092 B) TIJUANA 921

(SBU) SUMMARY: Various political leaders, security officials, and business figures in Tijuana claim - as did the Mayor during the Ambassador's recent visit (ref A) - that successful civilian-military law enforcement cooperation here has produced substantial progress in diminishing narco-related violence, but it is difficult to obtain reliable statistics to prove these claims. Official statistics do show a drop in murders in 2009 as compared to the previous year, but other types of crime, such as kidnappings, have increased. More importantly, lethal attacks on police and government officials have continued at an unprecedented pace. It is widely believed that violent crime statistics are artificially low because many citizens are afraid to report incidents to authorities whom they suspect have been corrupted by drug-trafficking organizations (DTO's). To the extent that the overall murder rate has dropped, many attribute this to the unusually good personal collaboration between the current Mexican Army commander and the Tijuana police chief, who is himself a former military officer. But this personal collaboration could end when one or both of these individuals move on. (END SUMMARY)

¶2. (SBU) Local politicians and law enforcement officials point to the steep drop in narco-related murders in Baja California, from 604 in 2008 to 202 in the first nine months of 2009, and a ten percent drop in overall crime in the first six months of 2009 versus the same period in 2008 (ref B). Most analysts credit the appointment of former military men to head municipal police entities, in particular Julian Leyzaola in Tijuana, and the state "preventative police" in Baja California, for better cooperation between civilian law enforcement and military forces resulting in some improvement in the security situation since 2008. Observers also note that the military has been deployed longer in Baja than in other hotspots along the border, such as Ciudad Juarez.

¶3. (SBU) Still, these statistics need to be viewed in context. An improvement over 2008 isn't saying much. Even Tijuana Mayor Jorge Ramos admitted that "~2008 was a horrible year for the city", with gun fights in busy streets being almost commonplace, and DTOs acting with near impunity. Most agree the city has been brought back from the brink, but Tijuana remains disputed territory between rival lieutenants of the Arellano Felix Organization (AFO) and Sinaloa DTO and therefore remains a high-crime city. Even if overall crime is down slightly from last year, certain types of crimes are increasing. "Deprivation of liberty" - kidnapping with no ransom, generally associated with DTOs - is up from 235 reported incidents in the first half of 2008 to 292 in 2009. The number of reported kidnapping with ransom remained steady. Tijuana's murder rate is still higher today than it was in 2005-2007. There have been 40 policemen killed in Baja California (most in Tijuana) so far in 2009 - on track to meet or exceed the 49 killed in all of ¶2008.

¶4. (SBU) Moreover, the progress that has been made is largely due to a personal relationship between Leyzaola and the military General deployed here. The relationship is not institutionalized and could wither with changing personalities. Despite efforts to weed out corrupt municipal police, there has been no progress on wholesale institutional reform needed, such as creation of a civil service career structure, better training, and more consistent leadership. More importantly,

progress on the streets has not been matched by progress in the judicial sector. For example, the local military and state police provided Post an impressive list of arrests and seizures of drugs and money for 2009. Even if the numbers are to be believed - and some USG sources have noted that "Baja California features statistics that are exceptionally and suspiciously higher than any other state" - there are no records of follow-on prosecutions resulting from these seizures. Without this piece of the puzzle, making permanent inroads against the DTOs will remain elusive.

KASHKETT